

2013 Letters About Literature Level 1 winner

Zoe Grace Vestal's letter to Cynthia Lord, author of *Touch Blue*

January 8, 2013

Dear Cynthia Lord,

Blessings are not always labeled. I have a very good life including a loving family, an exceptional school, a warm comfortable house, and plenty of friends. With all of these blessings I should have been content, but I wasn't. I labeled my life as the "same old routine" and I complained and grumbled.

I heard about a new book club at my local public library. I enjoy reading, so I joined. The first book I read with them was your book, *Touch Blue*. Through my journey with your book my viewpoint was completely turned around.

My selfishness had blinded me from the hurt in this world. My thoughts never dwelled deeply on foster care and foster children. Quite a bit ago, my relative took in two foster children. Back then I was too young to understand what it meant. Now, because of your book, I understand those brothers have been through more hardships than I have. I gained more compassion for foster children and for all other children who may not have the same things I used to take for granted.

Some of the decisions Tess made impacted me deeply. When Tess let the blue lobster go I wondered, "Would I do that?" After a few days of thought my conclusion was, "No." Because of the selflessness Tess showed in your book, I challenged myself: for thirty days my goal was to put others first. This meant putting the wants and needs of others before my own. Every single time the situation came up I would try to put their want, need, or opinion first. Most of the time I messed up, but I gained perseverance and willpower by trying to do what Tess did.

I also learned that it is important to pursue things that matter to you and that the smallest good deed is better than the most brilliant plan. Almost everyone in *Touch Blue* had a plan. When Aaron's behavior and rudeness seemed hopeless to Tess, she persevered by not

giving up on him; and by the end of the book she had developed a lasting relationship with Aaron.

Most importantly, I learned blessings do not always come in neat packages. Tess planned for Aaron to be exactly how she wanted him to be. But while she was planning and checking the details, she missed what Aaron needed most. Aaron came looking for love and acceptance. Tess was too focused on her own plan to notice. She had plenty of love to give him if she had just opened her eyes. That's exactly what I did. My perspective opened to include the real struggles of people around me; my world grew bigger and became more like reality. I have been thoroughly touched by your work, *Touch Blue*. I'm glad to have a new outlook that includes looking for all of the unlabeled blessings around me.

Yours sincerely,

Zoe Grace Vestal